

COMMENTARY / CULTURE

The unvarnished truths of our portraits!

By Terry Howard,
Contributing Writer

Norman Rockwell's self-portrait is one for the ages, one with multiple applications.

So, imagine for a moment that that's you in the picture, not Rockwell, paintbrush in hand, peering around the canvass at yourself in the mirror as you paint who you are...or think that you are.

You see, the reality is that unless we're blind, we are all "people watchers." From sunup to sundown, we observe scores of people at different places doing different things. We observe them while shopping, in airports, in places of worship, and even when driving by them on the freeway.

The further truth is that the people we "watch" are not always aware that we're observing them; their behaviors, what they say, how they say it. Which takes us to a contemporary challenge.

Rarely does a day go by these days when a person gets caught spewing something they thought to be "off mike" (most popular among them "moron," "Jerk," and "A-Hole") thinking that nobody's listening. Careers have been destroyed when someone says or posts something offensive. Hey, once the toothpaste is out of the tube you cannot force it back.

Although this may not have been your experience – not yet anyway – the fact is that in a sense we all exist under a microscope in that others observe our behaviors. In other words, "somebody's watching" and, rightly or wrongly, drawing conclusions and judging us based on what they saw, heard us say or post on social media.

Admittedly, there's no ques-

tion that it's not easy to look ourselves in the mirror. The reality, however, is that there is sometimes a mismatch between how we see ourselves and how others see us. This is further complicated by the fact that others may not tell us how they really see us for an assortment of reasons.

So let me offer an assessment, questions you may want to ask yourself in thinking about how others may see you. Chances are that some of the questions will provoke deep thought – and maybe some discomfort – enough for you to want to test them. Others less so.

Now as you work down the list, ask yourself "how would others respond to this question if he/she were asked it about me "when I'm not around?"

Feel free to use this tool in discussions with a mentor, a trusted friend or colleague. Have it nearby as a tool for periodic self-assessment. The potential applications are many.

What is my personal brand, what I'm known for when my name comes up in private conversations?

What are my strengths and weaknesses?

If I were to leave my home, job, etc., would most people shed tears of joy or tears of relief?

Am I upbeat, positive, and pleasant to be around?

Could I have habits, negative body language, etc., that others may find off-putting, annoying, or offensive?

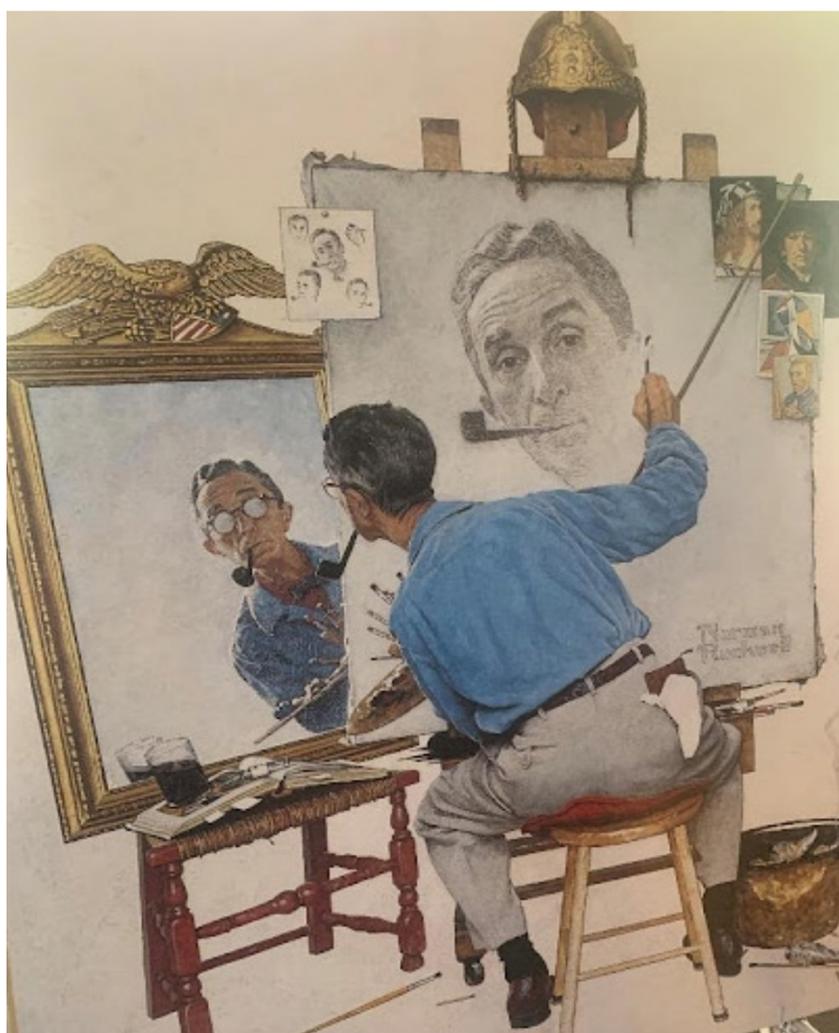
Is my language absent of pejoratives and expletives?

Is my reputation one of someone who always tells the truth?

Am I known for keeping promises and maintaining confidentiality?

Am I genuinely curious about other people's cultures, or would they say that I am culturally "near-sighted?"

Am I easy to listen to over the phone or is my voice off putting?



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Have I increased my tips for those service workers struggling to make ends meet these days?

Have I not apologized to someone I've hurt?

Is there someone sick with COVID that I've not reached out to?

Do I practice social distancing and don a mask in public?

Do I treat service people (cleaners, cashiers, receptionists, etc.) with the same level of respect as I do people in "high places?"

Am I known for speaking well of others when they're not around?

If someone makes inappropriate comments, do I laugh along?

Am I the type of person who bestows credit when it's warranted?

QUESTIONS FOR A THOUGHTFUL ANALYSIS:

Of all the above questions, which ones did you reflect on the most on and why?

What one or two questions were you privately relieved did not appear in this inventory?

Reread the list and write down things you will start doing, stop doing, or work on to make yourself a better person.

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words! And so are the unvarnished truths of our portraits.

© Terry Howard is an award-winning writer and storyteller; a contributing writer with the Chattanooga News Chronicle, The Douglas County Sentinel, The BlackMarket.com, co-founder of the "26 Tiny Paint Brushes" writ-

THIS WEEK IN AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

PATRICK FRANCIS HEALY (1834 – 1910)

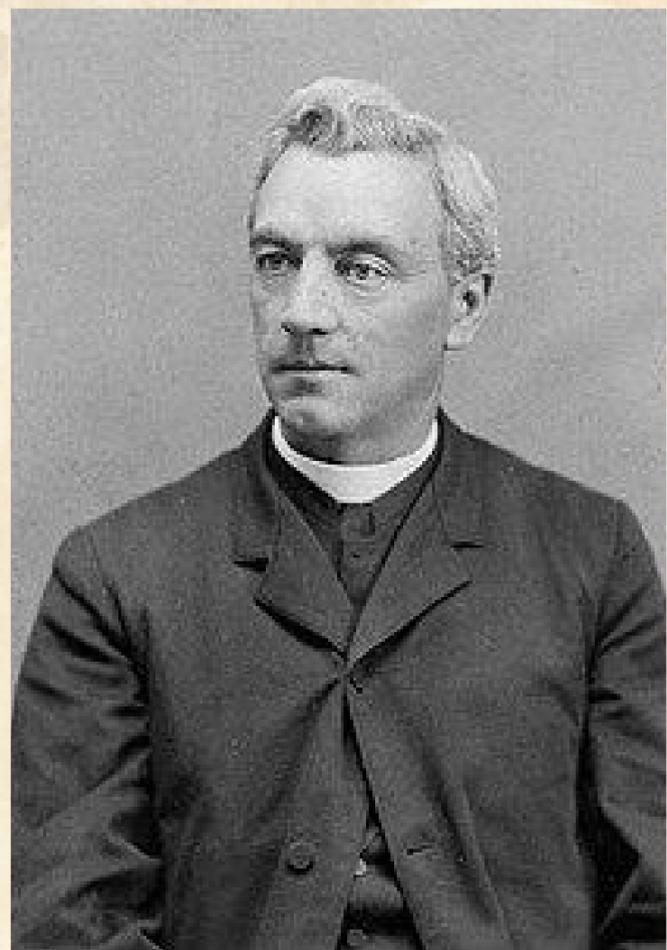
Patrick Francis Healy (February 27, 1834 – January 10, 1910) was an American Catholic priest and Jesuit who was an influential president of Georgetown University, becoming known as its "second founder". The university's flagship building, Healy Hall, bears his name. Though he considered himself and was largely accepted as White, Healy was posthumously recognized as the first Black American to become a Jesuit, earn a Ph.D., and become the president of a predominantly White university.

Healy was born in Georgia to a family that produced many Catholic leaders. His mother was one-eighth Black and his father was a White Irish emigrant. Under Georgia law, Healy's father technically owned his wife and children as slaves. Healy and his siblings were sent north by their father to be educated, and Healy continued his higher education at the Catholic University of Louvain, where he received his doctorate in philosophy in 1864. He returned to America and started as the chair of philosophy at Georgetown University.

Healy was elected president of George-

town University in 1873 and appointed rector the following year. Seeking to transform the institution into a modern university, he oversaw a period of growth. He increased the prominence of the sciences, raised the standards of the School of Medicine, and oversaw rapid expansion of the Law School. He also constructed a grand building that became known as Healy Hall, which left the university in substantial debt.

In 1882, he went to live with his brother, James, the Bishop of Portland, Maine, and the two traveled extensively throughout Europe. Afterwards, Healy returned to pastoral work in Rhode Island and New York City, before returning to Georgetown, where he died.



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